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SUBJECT: BASESCU'S ANNUAL ADDRESS TO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS:
ROMANIA AS "A CREDIBLE PARTNER"

¶1. (U) Summary: President Basescu made his annual New Year's foreign policy address to Bucharest's diplomatic corps on January 23. He confirmed that Romania would fulfill its international commitments, including its military deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan, and would work within the EU and NATO to address regional issues like energy security, the Balkans, and Moldova. The President made it clear that Romania intends to continue emphasizing as a policy priority the promotion of stability and prosperity in the Black Sea region. End Summary.

¶2. (U) In his annual January address to the diplomatic corps, Basescu highlighted Romania's coming of age as a member of the EU and NATO.. He pointed out that Romania was no longer a consumer of international aid and was ready to assume a stronger leadership role in the region. Using an upbeat tone, he emphasized that Romania is prepared to live up to its membership obligations in the EU and NATO, stating that his country "remains a dependable member of the international community, concerned with the problems of the community and their resolutions." Basescu only alluded in passing to Romania's post-EU accession "trials" (read: incomplete reforms) and general growing pains.

¶3. (U) Basescu urged that 2008 be the year for Europe's emergence as "a genuine global actor which wants and has the capacity to influence the process of globalization in favor of its citizens. He noted that the EU agenda was also Romania's and pledged that Romania would be among the first to ratify the Treaty of Lisbon. Basescu advocated a common effort to repair transatlantic relations and leave "certain tensions" in the past. He reaffirmed the centrality of the US in Romania's foreign policy outlook, and stated that he hoped to deepen the relationship this coming year.

¶4. (U) Basescu said Romania would support NATO membership for Croatia, Macedonia, and Albania at the Summit in April. Basescu reiterated Romania's strong support for Georgia's bid to join NATO, and added that Ukraine's application for the Atlantic Alliance "should be considered." On Kosovo, he argued that the only sustainable solution would involve continued negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina and the consensual agreement of the UN Security Council. However, to assist with peacekeeping efforts, Basescu reported that Romania's Supreme Council of National Defense (CSAT) had recently approved the deployment of an additional 175 policemen and gendarmes to participate in an EU mission in

Kosovo. Basescu also remarked that the Black Sea Forum had not yet reached its full potential, and that the region,s geostrategic importance to energy security, including the Nabucco gas pipeline and a proposed Constanta-Trieste oil pipeline, necessitated closer cooperation.

¶5. (U) On Moldova, Basescu urged the EU to consider Moldova,s membership application in the same light as the Western Balkan countries, and stated that in view of its strong cultural and historical ties to Moldova, Romania would assist in the process. Basescu also appealed for Moldova to "fully benefit from the from the advantages of being the EU's direct neighbor, including from the point of view of the mobility of its citizens, who would benefit and who would directly contribute to consolidate the democratic orientation of the neighboring state." Basescu volunteered to support Moldova in securing the integrity of its borders, with specific reference to the Transnistrian conflict.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: With the NATO summit quickly approaching, the speech,s emphasis on regional leadership and international cooperation was not surprising. Despite his boast that Romania is coming into its own in foreign policy terms, Basescu carefully steered clear of specific comments on Romania,s contributions in Iraq and Afghanistan and spoke of non-European issues only in the vaguest terms. End Comment.
TAUBMAN